



Date: June 30, 2015

Dear Interested Party:

The Helena Ranger District of the Helena National Forest has completed analyses and compiled a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Telegraph Vegetation Project. This project is designed to be responsive to mountain pine beetle outbreak by ensuring diverse and sustainable forest stands and wildlife habitat in the future, improving conditions for fire suppression, recovering economic value of dead and dying trees, and maintaining and improving watershed values. The DEIS for the project is available for your review and comment during a 45-day comment period which will begin around July 10, 2015. The DEIS can be viewed online at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/helena/landmanagement/projects>. Your comments are very important to our completion of a Final EIS (FEIS) and the ultimate decision. We will provide responses to your comments in the FEIS which may be used to develop new alternatives, improve analysis, or clarify information.

Two Public Open House meetings to discuss the DEIS's alternatives and analyses will be held from 4:00 to 7:00 pm at the following dates and locations. The meetings will be an open forum in which you may arrive at any time to ask Forest specialist questions and view project maps and documents.

- August 3, 2015 at the Helena National Forest Supervisor's Office (2880 Skyway Dr. Helena, MT 59602).
- August 4, 2015 at the Elliston Elementary School (205 West Main St, Elliston, MT 59728).

If you have any questions or need to request hard copies or CDs of material, please contact Helena District Ranger Heather DeGeest at (406) 449-5201.

**Project Information:**

The Telegraph Vegetation Project area is approximately 23,669 acres in size and is located roughly 15 miles southwest of Helena, and 5 miles south from Elliston, MT, in the Little Blackfoot drainage west of the Continental Divide. The project is located within all or part of Sections 14, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36 of T9N, R6W; Sections 25 and 36 of T9N, R7W; Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34; Sections 1 and 12 of T8N, R7W; and Sections 4, 5, and 6 of T7N, R6W; Powell County, MT; PMM. The Forest Service is proposing the following activities (by varying degrees) through two action alternatives:

- **Vegetation management activities** (intermediate harvest, regeneration harvest, and precommercial thinning)



- **Fuel management activities** (slashing and handpiling followed by broadcast and pile burning )
- **Watershed improvement activities** (Aquatic Organism Passage upgrades, road decommissioning, and road/stream crossing improvements).
- **Road management activities** (temporary road construction followed by full obliteration, road reconstruction, and road maintenance)
- **Forest Plan Amendment** (Forest-wide standard for thermal cover on winter range in the Jericho herd unit and winter range restrictions in order to proceed with winter logging in select units and from limitations on the size of openings associated with clearcuts)

*Commenting on the DEIS:*

The opportunity to comment on the DEIS ends 45-days following the date of publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) (36 CFR 218.25(a)(2)) in the Federal Register. The publication of the NOA in the Federal Register is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period. Interested parties should not rely on dates or timeframes provided by other sources. It is anticipated that the NOA for this DEIS will be published July 10, 2015. It is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to ensure that their comments are received in a timely manner as provided for in 36 CFR 218.25(a)(4).

Comments can be submitted via the following methods:

- **Email** [comments-northern-helena-helena@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-helena-helena@fs.fed.us) (Subject: Comments – Telegraph Vegetation Project). An automated response should confirm your electronic comment has been received. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format that is readable with optical character recognition software and be searchable, such as MS Word.
- **Fax** to (406)-449-5436 (Attn: Telegraph Vegetation Project - Allen Byrd Team Lead)
- **Mail or hand-deliver** to: Helena Ranger District, Helena National Forest, Attn: Telegraph Vegetation Project - Allen Byrd Team Lead, 2880 Skyway Dr. Helena, MT 59602 (Business hours are 8:00am-4:30pm for hand-delivered comments).

Comments submitted by individuals or organizations must meet the following requirements outlined in 36 CFR 218.25(a)(3):


- (i) Name and postal address. Email address in addition is recommended but not required.
- (ii) Title of the proposed project or activity.
- (iii) Specific written comments (as defined in 36 CFR 218.2) regarding the proposed project or activity, along with supporting reasons.
- (iv) Signature or other verification of identity upon request and identification of the individual or entity that authored the comment(s). For comments listing multiple entities or multiple individuals, a signature or other means of verification must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each entity and for each individual in the case of multiple names. A scanned signature or other means of verifying the identity of the individual or entity representative may be used for electronically submitted comments.
- (v) Individual members of an entity must submit their own comments to establish personal eligibility; comments received on behalf of an entity are considered as those of the entity only.

*Project-Level Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process (36 CFR 218):*

The proposed Telegraph Vegetation Project is implementing a land management plan and not authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA); therefore, it is subject to the Project-Level Predecisional Administrative Review Process under 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. Only individuals or organizations who submit timely and specific written comments regarding the proposed project during a public comment period established by the Responsible Official are eligible to file an objection.

Opportunity for public comment on a DEIS includes request for comments during scoping, the 40 CFR 1506.10 comment period, or other public involvement opportunities where written comment are requested by the responsible official (36 CFR 218.5(a)). This project was originally scoped under the provisions of 36 CFR 215. **For this project, individuals or organizations who submitted written comments in response to scoping conducted under 36 CFR 215 will be considered to have standing to object under 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. Those individuals or organizations that did not provide written comments during scoping must provide specific written comments (as defined in 36 CFR 218.2) on the DEIS in order to have standing to object.**

Sincerely,



WILLIAM AVEY  
Forest Supervisor

